Loophole by BooItsMi

Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King, Stranger Things (TV 2016)
Genre: Crossover, Drama & Romance, Horror, I'm literally the worst but I have so much planned for this, Mike will fight a clown for Will tbh, Multi, Stranger things x It, They thought they had 27 years but nope rip, Will thought he was safe but nope :), losers club antics, mike lucas and dustin show up to surprise will aye, post both the movie and season 1, unaware of the bs they're about to go through
Language: English
Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Dustin Henderson, Eddie Kaspbrak, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Hanlon, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Pennywise (IT), Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, The Losers Club (IT), Will Byers
Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough/Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak & Richie Tozier, Mike Wheeler & Pennywise (IT), Richie Tozier & Mike Wheeler, The Losers Club & Pennywise (IT), Will Byers & Pennywise (IT), Will Byers/Mike Wheeler
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2017-09-27
Updated: 2017-12-02
Packaged: 2022-04-03 05:07:55
Rating: Teen And Up Audiences
Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply
Chapters: 7
Words: 16,218
Publisher: archiveofourown.org
Summary:

When Joyce moves her family to Derry, Maine to give Will a fresh start after 'the incident', Will thinks his life is practically over, seeing as how he had to leave behind his life and his three best friends. But once he meets the Loser's Club and starts to settle in, things seem to finally be looking up for the boy who had gone through so much already. That is, until a killer clown named Pennywise starts wrecking havoc on the town of Derry once more, throwing Will through a loop and effectively catching the Losers completely off-guard.

As if matters couldn't get any worse, Mike, Lucas, and Dustin show up with the intention of surprising Will and getting their fourth member back through a "foolproof plan", but are quickly met with horrifying disaster not long after their arrival.

With the Losers' behind them, the four boys fight to survive against their new foe, one that is certainly much more unforgiving than the Demogorgon...

1. Only the Beginning

Author's Note:

I'm back with yet another story ayeeee

Since I'm obsessed with both series, why not make a crossover fic of my own, right?

So, this takes place after both the movie and the first season of the show. Bev's aunt lived in Derry all along or something, idk. Everyone thinks they're safe and that the storm is over, but they have a bigger storm coming, don't they? :)

Hope you guys enjoy!

"*... So, how is everything up there? Are you unpacked yet?* "

Will smiled small, crossing his legs in the chair he had pulled up beside their home phone. "Yeah, just about. I still have a box or two and we still have some stuff in the garage, but…" The clock on the stove read 10:04PM.

Surely, his mother and brother were both in bed by that point.

"*Did you get a good look around the place yet?* "

"No," Will bit his lip. "We've been so busy unpacking. But I'll get a glimpse tomorrow on the way to school…" He frowned, a pang of loneliness hitting his chest as reality settled in a bit. "It's definitely not going to be the same without you, Lucas, and Dustin there."

"*And vice versa here*," Mike murmured on the other end of the phone line, frowning a bit. "*... man, this sucks*."

The other nodded before he realized Mike couldn't see him. "Yeah, it… it really does."

Will could still remember how much it hurt to break the news of his leaving to his friends; how much it hurt to see the pain and sorrow in

their eyes.

To see the pain and sorrow in *Mike's* eyes.

"This isn't *fair,"* Mike had said when he was over at the Byers' place, helping the smaller boy pack for the big move. Will had just looked at him with sad eyes, speechless. "We should be growing up and going to high school together. We should be hanging out at the arcade and the diner and be playing more campaigns and all of the dumb dorky stuff we always do! We - " He had paused. "We just got you back, Will. *I* just got you back…"

That alone had caused more pain to Will than the action of packing up boxes with his best friend did.

But his mom had desperately wanted to give him a fresh start after everything that had happened while using whatever money she had left (Chief Hopper had even pitched in a little). So, Will never really had a chance at convincing her out of it.

The goodbyes weren't any less painful. Bear hugs were shared and tears were shed. Promises of 'I'll call you' and 'I won't ever forget you guys' were made and before Will knew it, he, Jonathan, and their mother were driving down the road after the moving van with him looking back at his three best friends.

It didn't take long for them to disappear in the distance.

His mother had felt horrible from taking him away from his friends, of course. But she truly believed in her heart that a change of scenery was what Will needed after… *that.*

But what Will couldn't understand was why she picked *Derry, Maine* of all places...

"*Will?* " Mike's slightly worried voice called through the phone, snapping the smaller boy back into reality. "*You still there??* "

"What-? Oh, uh, yeah. Sorry, I spaced out for a moment." Will bit his lip.

"*Maybe you should get to bed, then. We all know you need your beauty*

rest." He could practically hear the teasing smile in Mike's voice. "*Besides, we've been talking for over an hour, so..."*

Will breathed out a chuckle, nodding. "Yeah. I, uh, I guess you're right." He really didn't want to hang up with Mike so soon, but it *was* a school night and he could use some sleep. Besides, he had tomorrow night to talk to him, too. "Tell Dustin and Lucas I said hi, alright?"

"*I will.*" A pause. "*...Goodnight Will, and don't let any jerks push you around tomorrow.*"

"I won't," Will chuckled, a soft smile on his face. "Goodnight, Mike. I'll talk to you later."

"*Bye.*"

With much reluctance, Will placed the phone back on the receiver with a sad sigh and slowly made his way to his bedroom.

Here's to hoping this move wasn't the second worst thing to have happened to him.

"You're literally so full of shit."

"Your mom didn't think so last night-"

"What are you, *ten?!*"

"Yeah, *ten inches,*" Richie grinned, pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose. Across from him, Eddie rolled his eyes *hard* and shifted his focus to the half-eaten apple in his hand.

The lunchroom that Monday afternoon was loud and crazy as usual. Kids were throwing food at each other and talking shit when they weren't, and, all the way in the corner, six out of seven members of the Derry Loser's Club sat together, conversing and poking fun at each other as per usual. It was the one time during the school day they could all sit together, so they made sure to always make the most of it.

“I think ‘ten’ fits your IQ more than your dick size,” Beverly chimed, always quick with the comebacks.

“Would you like me to prove you wrong?” Richie’s lopsided grin never left his face.

“Gross,” Bev snorted, her grin growing when she noticed the unamused look Ben shot the trashmouth’s way.

Richie shrugged with absolutely no shame.

“*Anyways*,” Stan began with a roll of his eyes, desperate for a subject change as he glanced at Bill. “Do you mind if I take a glance at your math notes? I forgot mine at home and we have that test next hour, so…”

He trailed off when he noticed that Bill wasn’t even paying attention.

Stan raised an eyebrow. “Bill?” he tried again.

Still no response. Instead, the tall boy was staring at something, or rather, some*one* .

“Uh-oh,” Richie snickered. “Bill’s gone. He fucking broke. Wow, what a run we all had together, huh? Damn, I’m gonna miss him.”

“Oh, *shut up*,” Eddie bit, tired. He was just *tired*.

“*Bill,*” Stan tried again, relaxing when the boy finally snapped out of it.

“S-s-sorry, it’s just- Did you g-guys see th-the new k-kid?” the stuttering teen asked with a small frown.

“Oh, little Bowlcut?” Richie snorted. “Yeah, I've seen him around. I’ll tell ya, Bill, I never fucking expected to see someone shorter than Eddie here, but boy, was I fucking *floored*.”

“Kiss my ass,” Eddie murmured in response, oddly calm.

“He’s in my science class,” Ben said. “He seems nice, but he doesn’t talk much. His name’s Will, I think. Will Byers.”

“Wait, *Byers-* ?!” Bev sat up more. “As in, ‘the kid who came back from the dead’ Byers? His story was all over the news earlier this year!”

“Holy SHIT, seriously? That’s him?!” Richie’s jaw dropped, fascination written all over his face. “Jesus, I gotta meet this kid-”

“Don't you dare,” Eddie began, slightly panicked. “You’ll scare him to death-!”

“Too late~”

“RICHIE-”

But Richie was already out of his chair and on his way over to talk to him.

Eddie cursed and almost immediately, he and Bill hurried after him, knowing that the poor new kid wouldn't survive a second alone with him.

Richie casually strolled up to Will, who was just poking at his food. “You're smart, you know,” he snorted, grinning when the other boy jumped in his seat. “The food here tastes like complete asshole and graywater.”

His glasses had fallen down his nose once again, showing his face behind the thick lenses.

Will glanced up, clearly confused and a bit guarded, but once his eyes landed on Richie, his mouth fell open as his jaw went slack.

No way-

It couldn't be-

“*...M-Mike?!* ”

Richie paused, blinking as Bill and Eddie walked up beside him.

Who?

"Uh, sorry," Richie coughed, pushing his glasses back up his nose. "But I don't know who the fuck that is, and I'm guessing it's safe to assume you're not talking about Home School."

Will seemed to wilt a bit, his face coloring from slight embarrassment. "S-sorry. You, uh... you just look a lot like a boy I know."

Richie softened a bit before smirking and taking a seat across from Will, Eddie and Bill taking the seats on either side of him. He held out his hand. "No worries, Ol' Chap," he sang in a British accent. "The name's Richie. Richie Tozier. Certified trashmouth and the best looking guy here." He nodded his head towards the others. "And this is Eddie, certified germaphobe and Bill, certified... something-"

Bill rolled his eyes. Eddie sighed, used to it.

Will smiled slightly, amused, and shook his hand. Yeah. There was no way this was Mike. "I'm Will. Will-"

"B-Buh-Byers," Bill finished for him with a kind smile. "Yeah, we've heard of you. Y-you're like a legend."

Will's smile instantly fell as he took his hand back. "O-Oh... so... you know."

Richie nudged Bill, which was a first. Usually it was the other way around. "Yeah, we heard you went through some shit, but then came back all badass and breathing."

Will shifted in his seat, clearly uncomfortable.

Eddie spoke up next. "Uh, point is, we saw you sitting alone over here and wanted to come say hi." He coughed. "And, you know, save you from Richie."

Richie flipped him off.

Will snorted. These kids were definitely more outspoken than Mike, Lucas, and Dustin. But... they seemed nice, and he really could use the socializing. "Thanks. It actually means a lot."

Bill smiled. It was clear that this kid was just like them; an outcast. "Wuh-we have some m-more friends over there-" He turned and pointed towards Ben, Bev, and Stan. "W-wanna come sit with us...?"

Will perked up. It was only the first day and he already met some potential friends. "Y-yeah-! That'd be great...!"

"And I promise we won't bring up the past," Eddie said.

Richie snorted. "Yeah, we know how touchy bad things can fucking be. We've been through some shit too."

Eddie gave Richie a look. Always running his mouth.

Will cleared his throat and nodded, still giving a small smile. "Okay."

Richie grinned and stood.

"Well, Will 'Badass' Byers... Welcome to the Loser's Club."

2. Bonding

Notes for the Chapter:

> Finally back with another chapter! I apologize for the long wait. I've been a bit busy with work and things, but hopefully this chapter makes up for it!
>
> I promise, updates will be a bit quicker in the future.
>
> Love you guys and thank you for reading!

CRASH-

Thunder echoed over Derry High School as class finally let out for the day. Students were hurrying out of the school and into the pouring rain, running straight towards their buses, bikes, and cars, the fear of getting soaked or struck by lightning the only thing on their minds. Not even the idea of catching up with their friends after a long day of 'learning' was enough to slow them down.

Will bit his lip, shifting a bit in place as he watched through the window as the rain continued to fall. His mother had called the school an hour before the final bell, passing on a quick message to Will; Jonathan was going to be a little late picking him up, so he was to wait in front of the school and not move an inch from that spot.

He just hoped inside the front doors was a good enough spot to wait in, considering it was 'raining cats and dogs'.

As he watched the rain, he couldn't help but replay the day over in his mind. It had been interesting, really. After meeting the Loser's Club, his dull and quiet day quickly took a turn for the... *better*, he would say. He had a tiny bit in common with them all, already.

They, too, had all gone through something bad; something unspeakable that clearly remained a sore subject and would remain so for a long time.

Bill, especially, had been rather cold about the subject. Richie had earned a piece of pizza crust to the face when he started to mention

the name ‘Georgie’ (out of earshot of Bill, of course, but didn’t go unnoticed by those near him). That had raised many questions, but Will knew better than to ask them. Besides, he wouldn’t want them to poke and prod him about his own disappearance.

After the somber moment, the group quickly settled into a happier mood once more, instead choosing to get to know Will. The young boy hadn’t had many answers for them, mostly due to his shy nature. (“Who’s Mike, anyways?” “A best friend of mine.” “Was it a big town?” “No, not really.” “Any hot moms?” “N-no-?” “*Beep beep, Richie-*”)

The ‘Beep Beep’ phrase had been interesting to learn about, but Will didn’t deem himself worthy enough to use it on Richie anyways.

“Oi, William!”

Speak of the loud Devil.

The skittish boy jumped slightly as a familiar ‘accented’ voice called out to him and brought him out of his slight daze. Turning around, he spotted Richie making his way towards him, his glasses a tad lopsided and a goofy grin on his face.

Will’s heart clenched. It was still hard to look at Richie without immediately missing Mike and home.

“H-Hey, Richie,” Will greeted with a small smile, turning to fully face him. “What’s up?”

The trashmouth shrugged. “Not much. Bill and the others already went home and I’m technically supposed to be doing time in fucking detention right now, but I’d rather drink dog piss,” he hummed, shrugging without a care in the world. Will was still trying to get used to the heavy language that flowed freely from the boy’s mouth like water from a fountain. “What about you? Don’t you have a bus to catch or something?”

“My brother’s picking me up,” the smaller boy explained. “But he’s going to be late, so I’m stuck here for a bit.”

Richie nodded, almost assessing the scene. “Well, that fucking blows.

I wouldn't want to be stuck here in this shithole any longer than I had to."

Will nodded, which he had found out during lunch that that was all he could do around the Tozier boy.

Just nod.

Awkward silence quickly filled the air between the two boys, as neither one knew what to really say.

Richie finally spoke up a moment later, surprising the other. "I could give you a ride."

Will looked at him. "You have a car…? But you don't have a license yet, do you?"

The taller snorted, pushing his glasses up his nose. "No, oh my god, William, I meant on my bike."

Will frowned, glancing back outside.

As if on cue, thunder shook the ground once more.

"...you're insane," the mousy boy blurted, not even feeling bad for his bluntness. "It's *pouring* out there. Not to mention we'll be riding on a metal bike. Is that really *safe* for a thunderstorm?"

"Jesus Christ, you sound just like Eds," Richie groaned. "Look. We can either ride to my house, which is just a few blocks away, and you can call your brother and explain to him the situation. *Or* you can stay here, alone, and wait for him to come rescue you. But, again, you'll be alone and pretty fucking sad-looking. Your choice, dude."

Will just stared at him. During lunch, Eddie had tried to warn Will just how intense Richie could be, but also tried to reassure him that it was just his way of showing his love to his friends. As he recollected the conversation, the young boy couldn't help but wonder: was this a way of showing love or was Richie just being a jerk?

He liked to think it was the former.

He was also hesitant. Ever since the incident with the Upside-Down, his mother has been stricter than usual, which included longer groundings for not following rules or curfew. At the moment, Will really didn't feel like risking getting in trouble (especially if it meant potentially worrying and stressing out her and his brother).

However… He hadn't made friends outside of the Loser's Club and he didn't feel like being alone once more. Will had quickly decided that he had had enough of being alone, especially after everything that happened, and it wasn't exactly fair to him that Jonathan was running late.

Besides, he could always say the school never gave him the message and that he panicked.

"...okay," Will said after a moment, giving Richie a small smile. "But we better hurry if we don't want to get super soaked."

Richie grinned and wrapped an arm around the frail boy's shoulders. "Well! That settles that. This way, my good fellow! To my quick and slick bike, we go!"

With that, the two boys hurried into the storm, eager to get to Richie's and out of the rain.

As they rode off, they remained blissfully unaware of the sole red balloon that floated harmlessly from a nearby storm drain, oddly unaffected by the strong winds and rain.

"Mike? Are you down here?"

Silence.

"...Mike? *Hello?* "

"*Yes*. I'm down here. *What do you want?* "

Nancy bit her lip, calmly making her way down the basement stairs.

She spotted her brother after a small look around upon reaching the bottom step and the sad scene gently tugged at her heartstrings.

Mike sat on the couch a few feet away, quietly going through a stack of detailed drawings with slumped shoulders and a solemn expression.

“I just wanted to check on you,” she murmured. “Mom’s making dinner a bit early, too, so it’ll be ready soon.”

Trailing off, Nancy tilted her head, her eyes never leaving the pages in Mike’s hands. “Will drew all those, didn’t he?” she asked after a moment, a small smile on her face. “He’s an amazing artist.” She was trying, really.

It was another second before either of them spoke.

“We had a campaign planned, you know,” the black-haired boy said suddenly. “Will was going to be the DM. He was really excited, too.” He shrugged, glancing up at her with sad eyes. “I guess I’ll never know what happens in it.”

Nancy sighed, walking over and sitting beside Mike. “I know the past few months have been really hard on you,” she said softly in an attempt to comfort him. She even took his hand. “Losing Will, then Eleven, then Will again…?”

Normally, one would think Mike was overreacting about Will moving. People moved. Best friends left. Sure, it was sad, but you learned to move past it.

But Mike and Will were different. Very different. They were the closest with each other out of the group of four. Having been friends for years, they rarely went a few days at the most without seeing each other.

Will had made Mike happy and everything that had happened to them stole that happiness away from her brother. Most of it, anyways, but it still made Nancy sick to think that her brother had been through so much.

Mike immediately grew defensive at her bluntness, snatching his

hand away. The drawings fell to the floor. "*Sure*, pretend like you know what I've been going through. How would you know what losing a best friend is like, anyways, let alone two?!"

He said it purely on impulse, which proved he hadn't stopped to think about the impact of his words.

But, as soon as the words left his mouth, realization hit him like an oncoming train and guilt gnawed at him as Nancy looked down at her lap. "S-shoot, Nance, I-I'm sorry, I-I wasn't thinking-"

"It's okay." His sister turned back to him with a sad smile. The subject of Barb was still a sore spot with her and the drastic statement hurt a bit more than she'd admit, but she knew Mike. He didn't mean it. He was just hurting. "Really. I know you didn't mean it."

Mike still felt horrible, that was obvious, but he gave her a resigned nod.

"...what do I do, Nancy?" Mike murmured, glancing up at her. "Will was my *best friend*, and now he's gone. Sure, I can talk to him on the phone, but it's not the same." He shook his head. "At least when he went missing, there was still that hope of seeing him again. But… it's going to be a long, long time before I can even *try* to see him again."

Nancy pursed her lips at that as an idea hit her suddenly.

"...we'll see about that," she murmured. Mike looked at her questioningly, clearly confused, but she continued before he could say anything else. "But I suggest you do whatever you have to to keep your spirits up, Michael. Understand me? Your happiness is more important than you might realize."

Her brother gave a small, dumbfounded nod.

Nancy smiled. "Good. Now, did you want to come up for dinner or would you rather me bring some down for you?"

Mike blinked at the sudden subject change. "U-uh, I'd rather stay down here, if that's okay…?"

Nancy nodded. “Sure. But don’t expect it too much in the future, okay?” She smiled and nudged Mike affectionately before standing. “I’ll be back with your plate in a little bit, Mikey.”

Mike made a face. “*Never* call me that again.”

Nancy chuckled before turning and quickly making her way up the stairs. She was glad Mike decided to stay in the basement. That meant she could ask her mom a certain question that was definitely going to take a lot of convincing for the answer she wanted.

But she could do it.

She knew she could.

Her little brother's happiness depended on it.

Notes for the Chapter:

> I'm a sucker for sibling bonding. Also, Richie and Will friendship? I think yes!
>
> Just for the record, I'm making the Losers and the four Hawkins kids in the same age group. For the sake of the story~
>
> Again, hope you all enjoyed and the next chapter is when things REALLY start to get fun~
>
> Let's see how Will fares meeting Pennywise for the first time...
>
> Love you all!

3. Back to the Basement

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi guys! First of all, I apologize for the long wait. You have no idea how hard I've been working on this chapter all week lol. I kept writing it and rewriting it and deleting and-
>
> It was just a huge mess rip. But it's finally here and I'm finally content with it!
>
> By the way, just a quick message, you may have noticed I changed a pairing in the tags; from one that is very popular in this fandom to one not as popular. I hope my decision doesn't deter anyone from reading this story, seeing as how I'm going to be more focused on interactions between the Stranger Things kids and the Loser's Club rather than the romances.
>
> I love all my readers and I promise, I'll make the change up to you with a kick-ass story!
>
> Anywho, I love you all and I hope you enjoy this chapter!
>
> Rip Will.

“Look who I found in a box by the street!”

Richie grinned, pushing up his glasses and walking into the living room of the Denbroughs’ home. Behind him, a sopping wet Will shivered by the door as he glared daggers into the back of Richie’s head.

During their excursion in the rain, it hadn’t taken Will long to realize that Richie had tricked him. The ride length had been too long for just a ‘few blocks’ and when confronted about it, Richie had just snickered and shouted back at him over the rain in a weird British

accent, “If I had told you the truth, Willy Boy, you’d have never agreed to it!”

‘It’ being the annual Monday night Losers’ gathering at Bill’s house, which, obviously, was much further away from the school than Richie’s house.

Will felt betrayed and he’d only known Richie for a day.

So there Will stood in an unfamiliar foyer, cold, wet, and frustrated; not to mention stressed, thanks to the fact that Jonathan could have gotten to the school by now and freaked upon seeing that Will wasn’t there.

“R-Richie, you’re g-g-getting water everywhere,” Bill stressed, wincing as Richie plopped onto the couch in between him and Eddie.

“Oh, so everyone got here dry as a fucking desert, then?” the Trashmouth grumbled, yet made no move to get up.

“We waited by the door until Bill got towels,” a boy Will didn’t recognize muttered from where he sat beside Stan and Beverly on the other couch. “You know, like a guest should?”

“Bill and I go way back, Mike-n-Ike,” Richie chimed, leaning into said tall boy. “He doesn’t mind.”

So, his name was Mike too...?

Will sighed. He couldn’t catch a break. Everything just reminded him of Hawkins.

“Here,” a voice beside Will piped, making the soaked boy jump slightly. He turned to see Ben holding out a towel with a small smile. “I figured you could use one.”

Will took it with a grateful smile, immediately wrapping it around himself after taking off his shoes and backpack. “Thanks.” He still felt a bit awkward around the group, seeing as how he didn’t know them all that well.

It must’ve showed, because Ben simply smiled at him and then

moved towards the living room to give him space.

After a moment, Will went to follow, but stopped in place upon remembering: *The phone call.*

“Hey, Bill…?” he called as Richie and Eddie went back and forth on the couch (*"Don’t you have detention?” “Don’t you have a fucking pill to take?”*). “Do you mind if I use your phone real quick?”

Bill shook his head, kind as ever. “N-not at all. It’s in th-the kitchen by the basement d-d-door.”

Murmuring a quick thanks, Will turned away from his new friends and hurried off.

The phone call had been a bit tense, to say the least.

Joyce had not been happy to hear that Will had disobeyed her and left with a friend. Will had stood there with a frown for five long minutes as Joyce went on a rant about how irresponsible that was and how something could have happened to him and she would’ve had no way of knowing.

In the end, however, Joyce had only cared about one thing, much to her son’s relief.

And that was Will’s safety.

“Now, all I want to know is that you’re *safe*. You’re safe, right?” Joyce had asked after her long speech. Will had zoned out for a moment, but quickly snapped back into reality at his mother’s question.

“Yeah.” Will bit his lip, feeling a bit guilty. “I am.”

“Okay. Good… just call home when you’re getting ready to leave and have Jonathan come get you. I do *not* want you walking home alone, you hear me?”

“Yes, mom,” Will murmured. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s alright. I’m just glad you’re okay.”

Will relaxed. His mother could scream and shout at him and carry on and he’d *still* think he had the world’s greatest mom. Everything she did was for him and Jonathan. How could he not adore her?

After they exchanged a few more words and goodbyes, Will finally hung up the phone with a small sigh.

That phone call definitely could’ve gone worse.

“RICHIE, JESUS, THAT’S *DISGUSTING* ,” Will suddenly heard Eddie *shriek* from the living room. Laughter quickly followed as Richie easily shot back with a sarcastic mom joke and the noise soon died down once more.

Will smiled to himself. He’d finished day one at his new school and he’d already found a group of friends to belong to. They had welcomed him into their group without hesitation; had given him a sense of much needed normalcy and he was beyond grateful.

He couldn’t wait to get home and tell Mike all about it.

Still smiling, Will wrapped his towel tighter around himself and moved to leave the kitchen to rejoin the others. But just before he could pass the doorway, a low whisper from behind stopped him dead in his tracks.

“***Will…***"

His heart skipped a beat and a chill ran up his spine as he glanced behind him. He didn't just imagine that, right?

Will hesitated before turning back around and attempting to leave once more.

“***Will…***"

There it was again.

Will slowly turned fully around, his heart rate increasing as his eyes landed on the open basement door. That hadn’t always been open,

had it…?

He glanced back towards the living room nervously. Will wasn't comfortable snooping in the homes of other people, and in this case, he definitely wasn't comfortable doing so in the home of a newly found friend.

But in the end, his curiosity outweighed his morals and soon enough, Will Byers found himself descending the basement stairs of Bill's home.

"Will's been on the phone for a while," Bev suddenly said, causing Richie to stop his action of messing with Bill's hair. "Do you think he's okay?"

"Why wouldn't he be?" Ben asked, a little unnerved. Was there something going on he didn't know about?

"He was going to call his mom," Richie hummed casually, resuming his activity. "Maybe he's getting chewed out by the bitch."

"How do you know his mom's a bitch?" Eddie huffed.

"A bit defensive there, aren't we, Eds? Got a little crush on the woman?"

"I've never even met her, you *chode,*" the smaller boy snapped.

Richie blew him a kiss.

"Should one of us go check on him?" Mike quickly cut in, genuinely concerned. It was sweet, really, how Mike barely knew Will yet was just as worried about him as he would be with any of the other Losers.

"You guys are blowing this way out of proportion," Stan said matter-of-factly. "I'm sure he's fine."

Bill bit his lip, glancing in the direction of the kitchen as Richie continued to play with his hair.

Something definitely didn't sit right with him.

And he wasn't about to just sit and act as if nothing was wrong.

“I-I’ll be right b-buh-back,” the tall boy murmured and stood, ignoring Richie’s protests as he hurried out of the room and towards the kitchen.

The others watched him go, all wondering the same thing: should they follow their leader or wait for him?

Upon reaching the bottom of the stairs, Will paused, his breath hitching as he surveyed the dark basement. It wasn’t long before his expectations of something horrible happening started to diminish.

Everything just seemed… still; lifeless.

Nothing moved. Nothing spoke. Nothing blinked.

There was *nothing*.

“I couldn’t have imagined it,” Will muttered to himself, looking around in slight disbelief as he traveled further into the room. It had sounded so real; *felt* so real.

It **was** real.

And Will learned that the hard way the moment he turned around to go upstairs and came face-to-face with none other than the monster that caused so many sleepless nights.

Lightning lit up the basement, illuminating the Demogorgon as it opened its jaws, screeching right in Will’s face.

*Real and **there**.*

Letting out a cry, Will fell back onto the hard ground. Immediately, his feet kicked out at the floor as he desperately tried to put as much distance as he could between himself and the monster.

Tiny pebbles from cracked concrete dug into the palms of his hands

as Will continued to scramble back, his chest tight with sheer panic and terror.

"*Not again,*" Will choked, unable to truly find his voice. "I-I'm not strong enough*, please*-"

The horrifying creature continued to stalk forward, the all-too familiar sounds and croaks of malevolence dripping from its inhuman vocal cords like tar.

Tar that Will just kept sinking in.

His back hit the wall and Will felt his heart skip a beat as lightning lit up the creature once more, approaching him in a sort-of taunting manner; as if it *knew* Will's time on Earth was now limited, and it probably did.

This can't be it, Will thought helplessly, which was all he could do as the grotesque monster stalked towards him. *This can't be the end.*

Especially not after everything he and his friends- his *family*- had gone through.

The Demogorgon got even closer, and that's when Will closed his eyes and grabbed at his hair, curling into himself as if that action alone would be enough to protect himself.

"***Will.***"

That damned voice again.

Against his better judgment, the young boy slowly opened his eyes.

His breath suddenly left his body.

Inches from his face, a peculiar clown grinned maliciously at him, its teeth just as sharp as the Demogorgon's.

Will couldn't find his voice. It was as if the clown itself stole it.

"The demogorgon," It seemed to chuckle. "***It got you***."

The young boy suddenly *screamed* at the top of his lungs as the weight of everything that had happened to him came crashing down with just those five words.

He covered his face with his hands as the clown cackled in delight at Will's terror.

"*And I'll **get you too**!"*

"WILL! "

Bill gripped his shoulders and shook him, barely avoiding a fist in his eye as Will lashed out against his hold. The smaller's eyes remained shut tight as terrified screams continued to erupt from his mouth.

"***WILL, STOP, I-IT'S ME! B-BILL!!"***

Finally, after what seemed like years, Will opened his eyes, his screams abruptly cutting off as if someone simply pressed a button.

Bill slumped with a relieved sigh as his tight hold on Will relaxed.

"Jesus Christ," Richie breathed from where he and the Losers were gathered behind Bill, all of whom came running after the taller boy upon hearing Will's screams. "Who knew that tiny Bowlcut could screech so fucking loud?!"

Mike glared at Richie, annoyed by his apathy, before walking forward, kneeling beside Bill. "Hey," he murmured, resting a hand on Will's shoulder. The boy looked up at him, sweat dripping down the side of his head as he regained his composure. "Are you alright?"

Will simply nodded at his newest friend (the act of becoming friends remained unspoken but *there*). His chest visibly rose and fell with every deep breath he took.

His breathing didn't help his shaking hands, however.

"Will," Bill suddenly murmured, snatching the boy's attention. "W-wh-what happened…?!"

Will was quiet, and for a moment there, the seven kids truly believed that he wasn't going to say anything.

Until-

"A clown."

Time seemed to freeze around the Losers as Will's tired gaze locked with Bill's horrified one.

The younger licked his lips.

"It almost got me."

Notes for the Chapter:

Again, I hope you lovelies enjoyed this chapter!

Mike Wheeler and Friends™ will be back next chapter.

For a reunion maybe...????

Who knows? :)

4. The Boys Are Back In Town

Notes for the Chapter:

> Alright! Finally! We have the fourth chapter and, oh boy, it's a monster lmao. I went a little overboard with the details in it, but I'm also a bit proud, considering I'm never usually one to write chapters this big? I feel like I've been steadily improving as I write this fic and hopefully I'll get even better!
>
> So, I'm sorry for the long chapter, but hopefully, that's a good thing for you guys!
>
> The next update will be soon, considering I'm super excited to write it out for you! And I must say, I'm blown away by the response I've gotten to this story. Your comments and kudos mean the absolute world to me and I'm so happy you guys are loving this fic as much as I am!!! Thank you so so much for supporting it!!
>
> Hope you enjoy this chapter! <3

“Quit shoving!”

“Quit digging your elbow into my side!”

“I’m not even touching you!”

“‘I’m nOt eVEn touchING YOu’!”

“Oh, so *now* we’ve resorted to mocking and acting like we’re three?!”

“Correction: acting like we’re *five*.”

“You *do* know that doesn’t help your case, right?”

“Oh, *bite me*!”

“That’s ironic-”

“*Lucas-!* ”

Mike Wheeler pinched the bridge of his nose, stifling an irritated groan as the obnoxious bickering provided by two of his best friends continued on in the seats to his left.

It was only a thirty minute ride to the airport, yet Dustin and Lucas somehow managed to make it seem like a 12 hour roadtrip.

Mike couldn’t help but be slightly impressed. That couldn’t be easy to do, but boy, did they sure accomplish it.

In the driver’s seat, Mike’s mother, Karen, eyed the three boys in the back, sighing slightly. “I’d appreciate it if you boys could show me that you’re mature enough to get on this plane alone. Otherwise, we’ll have to pick another weekend to see Will.”

Mike knew for a fact his mother was bluffing. Plane tickets were expensive, not to mention non-refundable. The fact these were round trip tickets didn’t exactly help, either.

So, yeah. They were going this weekend no matter what.

However, Lucas and Dustin weren’t aware of these facts and immediately, the two boys ceased their dispute.

Sighing in relief, Mike turned back to the window, watching the trees pass by in a blur. His leg bounced at a high speed as the antsy boy lost himself in his thoughts.

Mike couldn’t remember a time he’d been more grateful for his sister. Apparently, after their quick talk in the basement, Nancy had gone upstairs to immediately talk to their mother about sending Mike, Lucas, and Dustin to Maine to visit Will for a few days.

It had taken quite some convincing, seeing as how their mother wasn’t exactly thrilled at the thought of sending Mike and his friends to Maine alone. She also wasn’t too keen on spending the money for a round trip plane ticket, not to mention the fact that she wasn’t even sure if Lucas and Dustin’s respective parents would be okay with these plans-

Especially ones taking place so soon, seeing as how Nancy was pushing for the visit to happen that upcoming weekend.

After a bit of grovelling and promising to pay her back for some of the ticket, Nancy finally- *finally*- succeeded in convincing their mother.

Then it was just dealing with Lucas and Dustin.

Surprisingly, it wasn't all that hard for Karen to convince the Hendersons and the Sinclairs, and before the three boys knew it, they were all being sat down at the Wheelers' home to be given the good news.

The boys had jumped up off of the couch, cheering and laughing as they soon realized *they were going to see Will again!*

Karen couldn't remember the last time Mike had hugged Nancy that hard.

But as she watched the kids, she suddenly realized; she had almost forgot to call Joyce about everything. After all, it was her house the boys would (hopefully) be staying in.

Karen had been very nervous upon realizing this; if Joyce said no, then the plans would be cancelled and she'd have to break the bad news to the boys after just having told them the opposite.

Fortunately, Joyce had been more than ecstatic to hear that the boys were able to come up to Maine for the weekend and she quickly agreed to anything Karen had planned. She had even added to it, saying how she was going to have this be a surprise for Will and that the boys weren't allowed to say *anything* to him for the rest of the week.

That was all Tuesday night.

It was now Friday.

Mike smiled to himself as they neared the airport. He glanced at the clock on the dashboard. 11:01am. About an hour before their plane left for Maine.

He shifted a bit in his seat as they pulled into the huge complex, eager to jump out of the car and get to their gate. The next 3 and a half hours were going to be the longest of his life, if he was being honest with himself. He just wanted to get to Maine and see the fourth member of their group.

He hadn't talked to Will since Monday night, and even then, their conversation had been short (Will had been acting weird the entire time, too; only giving out small 'yeah's and 'okay's. Mike had just assumed it was because of how fast everything was moving in the younger boy's life). He supposed it was his fault that they hadn't talked much.

Mike had just been so scared of spilling the beans about their visit that he just didn't call. Sure, he felt bad, but he knew Will would understand when they showed up on his doorstep.

"Okay, everyone," Karen hummed as they finally parked. "Get your bags. Make sure you have *everything*; I do *not* want Joyce having to buy any necessities for you that you could've brought yourself."

Mike pursed his lips. Leave it to his Mom to say stuff like that.

Lucas and Dustin excitedly grabbed their respective bags and hopped out of the car, 'friends once again'.

"Will's gonna *freak* when he sees us!"

"Oh, man, I wish I had a camera-"

Mike gave a small chuckle as the two continued to go back and forth, shuffling into the airport behind everyone and leaving Indiana behind-

For a lot longer than planned, unbeknownst to him or anyone else there.

Karen gripped Mike's shoulders tightly, clearly nervous. Her fingers

drummed lightly against him, her lips drawn into a thin line. “You promise you’ll call the moment you settle down at Joyce’s?” she asked.

“Yes, mom,” Mike droned, pretending like he didn’t hear Lucas and Dustin snickering behind him as the four of them stood in front of their plane gate.

People were now boarding, which meant Karen finally had to say goodbye to her son for an entire weekend.

Only an entire weekend, right?

“I mean it, Michael,” Karen said sternly, giving him a look. “Don’t you dare forget to call. *I mean it.*”

Mike just nodded, over it.

She stood up straighter, looking at the three boys as a whole. “Now… Joyce will be waiting for you all at your plane gate, okay? You. Do. Not. Leave. That. Area. Until. She’s. With. You. Understand?”

“Yeah,” Dustin mumbled with a nod.

“We understand,” Lucas confirmed, unnerved by the amount of stress she had put into the words she spoke.

“Good…” Karen sighed before pulling Mike into a tight hug.

Mike hugged her back, albeit a bit reluctantly. “Mom, It’s just a couple days,” he groaned. “We’ll be back Sunday night.”

“Michael, will you let me be a mother for *one moment?!* ”

Dustin’s face went red from how hard he was stifling his laughter.

Lucas just grinned. “Yeah, Mike, don’t push your mother away!”

Mike glared daggers at them around his mother’s side.

“Okay, okay,” Karen sighed, pulling away and smiling tightly. “I’ll see you boys here Sunday night around 8. Be safe. Have fun. Say hi to

the Byers for me, will you?"

The young dark-haired boy smiled small and nodded. "Will do mom. Thank you! Bye!"

Before Karen could have a chance to say anything else, Mike was grabbing Lucas and Dustin and hurrying towards the plane gate with their tickets and their backpacks.

She watched as the boys waved to her one last time before entering the tunnel.

As they went, Karen couldn't help but feel like something- just *something*- was going to go horribly wrong.

Taking a deep breath, she quietly told herself that it was just the mother in her talking and she went to go sit by the window to watch the plane take off.

Things would be just fine.

"Oh my god, if that baby doesn't stop crying, I'm going to jump out the emergency exit."

Mike snorted, turning away from the plane window to look at Dustin, who sat between him and Lucas with a scowl on his usually cheerful face.

Their plane had taken off about an hour ago.

"Yeah, have fun trying that out," Lucas hummed, also glancing at their annoyed friend. "You'll get tackled by the flight attendants before you could even open the door."

"It was a joke, Lucas."

"I'm just saying-"

"*I'm* just saying-"

“Okay, just because my mom isn’t here, doesn’t mean you two can start bickering again,” Mike grumbled.

Dustin and Lucas eyed each other before settling back down in their seats.

Mike suddenly sat up more. Now that he had their attention-

“I’m gonna try to see if I can get Will to move back to Hawkins,” he suddenly blurted.

Lucas choked on air while Dustin looked at Mike as if he had grown a second head.

“You’re kidding, right?” Lucas scoffed. “Mike, where is this even coming from?!”

“It’s coming from the fact that *I’m sick of losing people*.”

Her name remained unspoken, but Eleven was suddenly on all of their minds.

"Come *on*," Mike frowned. "You're really telling me you don't want Will back in Hawkins?!"

"O-Of course we do," Lucas stuttered.

“It's just... moving isn’t exactly easy, Mike,” Dustin mumbled after Lucas spoke. “I really doubt Miss Byers is going to just pack up all of their stuff, *again*, and move back to the town Will nearly died in.”

Mike frowned at that. “I’ll figure something out, okay?” he huffed. “The point is, I can’t do a weekend here and there; I can’t settle for phone calls. *I don’t want to leave Maine without him*.”

Lucas and Dustin shared a knowing look the minute those words left Mike’s mouth.

This did not go unnoticed by said boy.

“*What?* ” Mike asked, his frown still present.

“Nothing,” Lucas quickly dismissed.

Dustin coughed, looking away.

Rolling his eyes, Mike sat back in his seat, returning his attention to the window beside him. He wasn’t giving up that easily, though.

He was going to find a way.

This weekend wasn’t slipping through his fingers without *something* happening. He’d make sure of it.

The rest of the week had passed by quite uneventfully for one Will Byers, who hadn’t exactly taken the time to notice or care.

He’d been too distracted; too *out of it* to notice (or care).

Since Monday night, the poor boy had had nightmares every time he closed his eyes; nightmares of teeth. Nothing but sharp, long *teeth*. Of course, he had kept this a secret from his new friends in fear of driving them away. After the basement incident, Bill and the others had acted as if nothing had happened; they all remained awfully dismissive whenever Will tried to ask questions. “There was nothing down there,” one of them would ‘reassure’. “No need to worry, okay, Will? It was probably just your mind playing tricks on you.”

Yeah. Maybe.

Regardless, it was clear that they weren’t going to speak of it again (he *knows* they know something) for whatever reason. So, Will had given up trying to get answers and instead did what he had been doing since the Upside-Down; fighting his fears alone.

“ And I’ll get you too …!”

He winced.

That damned voice again.

Will shivered, snapping himself out of his thoughts by force and returning his attention to the others.

Currently, the young boy was sitting underneath a tree outside the front of the school, joined by the entirety of the Loser's Club; even Mike had biked into town to visit them. After all, it was Friday and school was out for the weekend, so why not hang out, right?

"Fucking Mr. P gave me a goddamn *C* on that graphing test," Richie scoffed. "The nerve of that old fucker."

"Maybe you should've studied harder," Stan deadpanned.

"Maybe you should mind your own fucking business," the trashmouth grumbled, being extra generous with the f-bombs that lovely afternoon.

Bill snorted. "S-Stan has a p-p-point, Richie," he lightly teased.

Richie looked especially offended that Bill out of all people had shot him down like that. "Wow, it's a good thing I asked for your guys' opinion and- oh, wait, shit. I forgot. I fucking *didn't*."

Bev rolled her eyes out of slight amusement, deciding to focus her attention on Ben and his newest project he'd been working on, which he'd been dying to show her ("Apparently, making a telegraph is easier than you'd think-!" "Really? Tell me more, New Kid on the Block.").

As the others went back and forth, same as always, Will stared off into the distance, watching as the other students walked to the waiting buses and cars. He used this moment to keep a watch out for Jonathan, who was supposedly picking him up soon.

Because of this, he didn't even notice that the others were trying to get his attention until someone (Richie) threw a pencil at him.

Will jumped, turning to face them. "... I-I'm sorry, what?"

Mike chuckled lightly. "We asked if you were free to come hang out at the Barrens with us?"

“I mean, seeing as how we’re your only friends, it’s safe to assume you are and- *ow!* ” Richie cut off as Eddie elbowed him.

“Don’t be fucking rude,” the shorter boy snapped. Richie just snickered, once again treating it as a big joke.

Will smiled, albeit a bit sadly. “I-I appreciate it,” he murmured. “But my mom specifically said that tonight was no good for any plans. She said we were doing something, but never told me what.”

“Bummer,” Bev murmured after overhearing, a small frown on her face. She was growing very fond of the smaller boy.

Will shrugged, feeling a bit bad. “Sorry. Maybe some other time?”

The others murmured their agreements and resumed their original conversations.

This gave Will some time to be left alone with his thoughts once more, which didn’t exactly sit right with him, seeing as how his mind kept going back to Monday night at Bill’s-

The clown.

Those damn teeth.

His entire life, Will had never been afraid of clowns. In fact, he quite enjoyed them. They were just silly, eccentric entertainers who only cared about bringing laughter and joy to kids; how could anyone hate them?

Will bit his lip. He had definitely gotten the answer to that Monday night, whether the incident had been real or not.

“*Will!”*

Once again, the boy was brought back into reality, glancing up in time to see Jonathan wave out the window of his car at him. “Come on, buddy, home’s awaiting!”

Will found the too-happy grin on Jonathan’s face rather unnerving.

“Is he high?” Richie struck again.

Will shot him an unamused look before grabbing his bag and standing. Waving good-bye to his friends, Will hopped into the front seat beside his brother, immediately buckling himself in.

“You’re in an awfully good mood…” Will murmured, raising an eyebrow at the older boy. Jonathan simply smirked at that, pulling away from the school.

“Today’s just a good day,” was the only response Will got before the older turned on the radio and sped down the road.

“Oh-! Okay. Here they come up the drive, now!” Joyce backed away from the window and grinned at the three boys to her left, making a mental note of the way Mike’s face lit up like the sun. Of course, Dustin and Lucas were just as ecstatic, but there was something about Mike that stayed with her. “Quick: did we decide on running out or jumping out and surprising him?”

“Jumping out. Definitely,” Dustin grinned, fixing his hat on his head.

“From behind the front door,” Lucas quickly finished. “You know, when they open it and walk in, Will won’t notice us behind him.”

“Sounds good,” Joyce hummed, glancing at the boys she had come to love as her own sons over the years. “I can’t wait to see the look on his face-!”

Mike zoned out a bit, peeking back out the window a little and watching with a small grin as Jonathan’s car came to a halt beside the place. His breath hitched as the doors opened and-

There he was.

Still the same small boy he was when he left Hawkins three or four weeks ago and laughing at something his brother said, Will Byers hurried up towards the front of his house, oblivious to the happenings inside the home.

Mike couldn't believe his best friend was *right there.*

Was this real?

He was so distracted that he would've given them away had it not been for Lucas and Dustin both yanking him back away from the window.

"*Idiot ,*" Lucas hissed. "You could've ruined it!"

"Okay, sorry, jeez," Mike huffed. "Now, instead of lecturing me, how about we just hurry up and hide?!"

The other two nodded, mutually agreeing that *they should probably do that,* and immediately got into position.

Mike could hardly contain himself as the front door opened, blocking them from view.

"Hey, mom," Will's voice suddenly filled the air. Mike was shocked by the way his heart jolted at the sound of it.

"Hey," Joyce grinned, hugging him in greeting. She pulled back and bit her lip to keep herself from smiling too big. She nodded at Jonathan, who immediately understood and closed the front door, moving to the side.

That's when the three boys struck, signalling the start of a long, long weekend.

"***SURPRISE!!!*** "

Notes for the Chapter:

> Now, I apologize if this chapter wasn't as exciting or interesting as you were hoping for, but I felt like getting to the reunion itself, especially after everything that happened in the last chapter, would be rushing this a bit too fast.
>
> I tried to put early hints of Byler and a touch of Benverly in as an apology <3

But again! I'm very very excited to write the next chapter and so it will be out a lot sooner than you think!!! <333

Side Note: I mentioned in this fic that the Byers have been in Derry for about a month. I just wanted to clear up that before Will went to school, they were there for about two weeks unpacking and settling in and really getting a feel for the place. Considering Will's been through a lot, I imagine Joyce would want to make sure he was okay before sending him into public school. Anywho, again, just wanted to clear up any confusion you might have had!

Love you guys!! See you next chapter! <3

5. Things Aren't Always What They Seem!

Notes for the Chapter:

> Okay! So! After yet another week of writer's block and writing and re-writing, here I finally am! At 1:30 in the morning! Working hard to make sure you guys get an update finally!
>
> About time @ myself
>
> Lmao, so I'm still not completely sastisfied with this chapter. Part of me feels like it's a bit all over the place, so I tried to fix it and make it as sensible as I could. I apologize if anything is confusing and I'll make sure to double-check everything tomorrow after I've had better sleep <3 also, just a forewarning!!!! there are very minor season 2 Stranger Things spoilers in this, but to be honest, they're little details from the first episode, so it's nothing major at all! <3
>
> Love you guys and thank you so so so much for your support! The amount of kudos and love I got from the last chapter blew me away! Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!
> <3333
>
> Hope you enjoy!

"***SURPRISE!!!*** "

Will felt his heart stop for a second.

Those voices.

He knew those voices.

The small boy spun around wide-eyed, the air suddenly knocked out of him as his gaze landed on his three best friends from Hawkins, Indiana.

All of whom had the brightest smiles on their excited faces.

"Oh my god," he breathed, his hands trembling. He choked out a laugh, covering his mouth for a moment before hurrying towards them. “O-oh my *GOD* -”

“BYERS!”

Will Byers is approximately 5’0” tall, but he tackles like he’s 6’11”.

All four of them went crashing to the ground, suddenly tangled in a mass of limbs and laughter. The pain they felt from the impact of hitting the floor easily went unnoticed as the joy of being back together overwhelmed them.

Joyce smiled warmly at the sight, relieved to see her little boy so happy. She nudged Jonathan, motioning for him to follow her out of the room. She figured the boys would want some time alone to settle in with one another.

“*Shit*, Will,” Dustin wheezed, laughing a bit as they all finally calmed down. His hat had been knocked off of his head in the process. “What the hell have they been feeding you? Steroids?!”

“S-sorry, sorry,” Will giggled sheepishly, sitting up a bit more to give them room to breathe. “I just... *w-when* did you guys- how did you guys-?!” The young boy could barely contain his excitement as he hugged them all at awkward angles once more.

Dustin. Lucas.

Mike -

They were all *there!*

“We rode here on our bikes,” Mike answered, his expression completely serious as he reluctantly pulled away from the small boy. “We left Hawkins on Tuesday.”

Will’s face fell at that, his eyes wide with disbelief. “... you *what?!* ”

“Oh my god, Will, he’s *kidding,*” Lucas snorted, managing to finally

nudge the others off of him and sit up to breathe. “We took a flight here.”

“Oh.” Will reddened a bit, embarrassed he had fallen for such a blatant joke. He glanced back at Mike, giving a soft, sheepish chuckle as their eyes met briefly. Mike smiled brightly in return.

Cute, the dark-haired boy thought fondly before stopping that train of thought immediately.

Where the hell did that *come from?*

“So, when’s the grand tour, Byers?” Dustin suddenly blurted, breaking Mike from his momentary confusion.

Will paused, turning away from Mike. “I- tour of what? My house?”

“Of Derry!” the curly-haired boy exclaimed. “Did you really think we were just going to hang around your house the whole time?”

“Dustin, I got home ten minutes ago. I wasn’t thinking anything,” Will snorted. He had forgotten just how forward his friend was.

“Lay off of him, Dustin,” Mike said pointedly. He’d been around Will for less than 15 minutes and he was already getting protective. That was a new record. “We just got here too, okay? Chill.”

“It’s okay- I don’t mind.” Will smiled reassuringly at Mike, which was all it took for the older boy to back down (how could he argue with a boy so optimistic and calm?). “Really, I don’t. Some friends of mine showed me some cool places earlier this week, so I would say I’m more prepared as a tour guide than you might think.”

“Wait- you made friends?” Lucas asked in *that* tone. Will frowned a bit at that, causing him to quickly correct himself. “Er, shit, I didn’t mean it like that- It’s just, you haven’t been here that long, right…?”

“He’s been here for 29 days,” Mike said a little too fast for comfort.

Will glanced at him, stunned he knew that.

Lucas and Dustin, once more, gave each other *The Look* before side-

eyeing their Paladin.

"...I-I mean, uh, it's not impossible to make a few friends within a month," Mike stuttered, trying to come back from the awkward mood.

It was quiet for a moment before Dustin spoke up again. "Has it really been a month…?"

Will nodded, biting his lip. "One of the longest of my life."

They were all sitting up on the floor now, legs crossed as they talked in a small circle.

"I-I'm *really* glad you guys are here," Will said after another moment, a warm smile on his face as he looked at the three boys sitting around him. "You have *no idea* how much I missed you…"

Mike felt his heart constrict at that. "... we missed you too, Will," he murmured, his throat suddenly tight. "So much."

"We're not the same without our Cleric," Lucas said with a half-smile.

"In fact, we *suck* without our Cleric," Dustin added on with a slight chuckle. "I'm talking ass-level suck."

Will let out a laugh at that.

Mike found it to be music to his ears.

"I'm not the same without you three, either," the smallest member said after his laughter died out. "This whole… place feels so foreign; *dangerous*, almost. The opposite of home." Will's smile fell, the clown once again rearing its ugly head in his mind.

I can't seem to escape thinking about it.

"'Dangerous'…?" Mike questioned, a small frown on his face. "What do you mean by that?"

Will didn't answer him right away.

That made the three of them nervous. “Will?” Lucas tried, leaning forward.

“...It’s nothing.” Will shook his head, taking a deep breath. “It’s just a weird feeling I have, that’s all. Don’t worry about it, okay?” He said it with such finality that Dustin and Lucas reluctantly let it slide.

Mike wasn’t going to, though. He knew Will like the back of his hand. After all, they had been friends since Kindergarten; *best* friends.

Something was up and Mike Wheeler was going to find out what it was.

So Mike sat there, lost in thought, while the others dove into other conversations. His mind soon found itself flashing back to the phone call he had had with Will on Monday night. Looking back on it, he remembered their conversation had practically been non-existent, considering Will hadn’t had much to say.

Mike frowned to himself. The entire time, Will had been acting stranger than usual; from the moment the call went through to the moment the phone was returned to the receiver.

In fact, now that he really thought about it, he remembered Will had asked him something strange before he hung up; something that had made his skin crawl for the first time since the Demogorgon incident…

Was what he asked the ‘dangerous’ part Will had been referring to?

As the dark-haired boy glanced back at the friend in question, who was laughing at a story Dustin was reenacting, Mike couldn’t help but *pray* that that wasn’t the case.

His best friend had been through so much already. What more could the universe throw at him?

“Will?”

“Yeah…?”

“You sure you’re okay…? Did something happen?”

“…”

“Hello-?”

“Nothing happened. I just had a bad dream last night, that’s all.”

“Want to talk about it?”

“Not really.”

“You sure?*"*

“… Mike, do you, um… believe in Demons?”

“W-woah, what? Will, where did that come from?”

“Nowhere, nothing, nevermind-”

“Will, slow down-”

“I should go. I’ll talk to you later, okay? I’m sorry I didn’t have much to say tonight.”

“Will…”

“Goodnight, Mike.”

“*Mike! ”*

Mike Hanlon jumped awake, squinting blearily at Eddie once his heart rate slowed down. The other boy was giving him a weird look inches from his face.

“Jesus, we thought you were dead,” the small hypochondriac huffed, sitting back on his legs next to Stan, who clearly didn’t want to be a part of it. A little ways away, Bill and Richie were in the middle of

trying to catch a frog in the nearby creek, and near them, Ben and Bev sat in a small huddle, whispering and chuckling with one another. What they were talking about, Mike had no clue.

Other than that, the Barrens contained nothing but peaceful sounds and vivid trees.

The tunnel entrance to the sewers sat a few feet away from them, dark, big, and uninviting.

“Relax, I was just asleep,” Mike mumbled, sitting up more and stifling a yawn. “Haven’t you ever seen a sleeping kid before?”

Stan snickered, earning an elbow in the side courtesy of Eddie.

“You were breathing all weird; I panicked,” the smaller grumbled.

Mike just stared at him, confused and a bit offended. “Maybe that’s just how I sleep?”

“It… is?”

“Yeah…?”

“Do you have sleep apnea?”

“*Seriously?* ”

“Alright, easy there, Eds, Mike’s alive, move along,” Richie suddenly interrupted as he plopped down on Mike’s other side; a blessing in disguise.

Eddie grumbled under his breath (“*Don’t call me that.”)* before moving back a little with Stan as the rest of the Losers rejoined them.

Richie had a small frog in his hand, which he happily placed on Bill’s knee once the stuttering boy took his place next to him.

Bill eyed him. “You s-s-said you weren’t g-going to give him b-buh-back,” he muttered to Richie, watching as the frog just sat there. The trashmouth snickered from beside him.

“I say a lot of fucking things, Bill,” he hummed. “Surely you know this by now?”

Bill rolled his eyes, the corner of his mouth twitching upwards. Richie was a pain sometimes, but he could never bring himself to be truly annoyed with him.

Bev sighed lightly. “... this feels weird now,” she blurted after a moment of silence, leaning into Ben.

“What does?” Stan questioned, a bit confused as to where that came from.

“*This*.” She gestured to the whole group. “It feels off.”

“Is it because of Will?” Eddie asked, catching on. He pursed his lips when Bev nodded in reply. “I mean, I understand why. We literally spent all week with him and now he’s suddenly not around.”

“Well, excuse *him* for having a life outside of us,” Mike chuckled.

“That’s the thing, though,” Ben snorted. “We’re Losers. We’re not supposed to have lives.” He was obviously joking, but some took it to heart more than others.

“I wouldn’t say spending time with your mother is ‘having a life,’” Richie hummed, poking at the frog on Bill’s knee. “I mean, if it was, Eddie would have one, too.”

Eddie casually flipped him the bird.

“Well, nothing we can do about it now, you know?” Mike cut in.

Richie paused, his mouth stretching into a Cheshire grin. “Now, hold on a fucking minute, Michael-”

He looked over at him, pushing his glasses back up his nose.

“That might not be true.”

As the afternoon slid into the evening, the four boys found themselves holed up in Will's room, discussing what the young boy had missed in Hawkins since his departure. They had all decided it'd be best to explore the town the next day, seeing as how they'd have more time to really enjoy everything that came with the 'tour'.

Not to mention that night was soon approaching, and Will definitely would be more comfortable exploring with the sun out.

"So, the new girl you were talking about, Max," Will started, picking up a chip from a nearby bowl they had grabbed from the kitchen and biting into it. "Is she cool?"

"The coolest," Lucas gushed.

"She beat my scores on both *Dig Dug and Centipede!* " Dustin exclaimed, munching on some chips himself.

Will's jaw dropped. "*No way*, seriously?!"

Mike rolled his eyes. "Sure, she's good at video games and all, but she's also rude as hell," he huffed. "Not to mention annoying."

Will glanced at Mike. "I'm guessing you don't like her, then…?"

"No. I don't."

"Mike's just bitter because he's worried she'll replace Eleven," Dustin muttered, quite defensive of Max.

Mike's gaze hardened and he glared daggers at Dustin. "*No one* can EVER replace Eleven," he snapped.

Will didn't know why, but his heart sunk just a little bit at that.

Before anything else could be said, a knock sounded at the front door, saving Dustin from more of Mike's wrath.

Will hopped up, grateful for the distraction. "I'll get it!" he called, leaving his room and hurrying to the door so his mother didn't have to stop making dinner to answer it.

He quickly opened the door-

And paused when he noticed that no one was there.

Will frowned to himself. He was already getting that weird, unsettling feeling in the pit of his stomach and yet, nothing had happened. He bit his lip, stepping out a bit further into the warm evening air. “Hello?” he called out, looking around for any signs of life. “*Hello??* ”

Nothing.

“Okay, then,” the small boy muttered under his breath. “Guess it was nothing…” He then turned back around to go inside-

But instead came face-to-face with a red ‘I <3 Derry’ balloon.

He jumped back, his eyes a bit wide as a small gasp left his mouth. *That wasn’t always there, was it…?!*

Will’s eyes followed the balloon string down towards the ground, quickly noticing it was attached to something; a little box wrapped in paper, small enough to fit into his hand.

‘***TO, ZOMBIE BOY. LOVE, PENNY,'*** was scrawled right on top of it.

Will’s breath hitched. He was hesitant; *very* hesitant. That box had definitely not been there when he had stepped outside, so how the hell did it get there when he turned around? Who was ‘Penny,’ anyways? Should he even trust it?!

As expected, though, his curiosity got the best of him once more after a long battle with his morals and common sense, and before he knew it, he was unwrapping the box with his trembling hands.

A pause.

You can turn back.

No. He didn't want to.

Taking a small deep breath, Will finally took off the lid and peered inside.

Time seemed to freeze.

The color quickly drained from his already-pale face as his eyes stared at the contents of the box. He slumped back against the front door, shaking like a leaf as he slammed the lid back down onto the box in his hand.

The red balloon floated off, no longer tied down.

Will closed his eyes, trying his best to calm himself down so he could return to the others.

Of course, life seemed to have other plans as a voice called out to him from down the drive.

"WILLIAM. HEY!"

The voice belonged to none other than Richie Tozier, who was marching up the driveway with the entirety of the Loser's Club.

Will deflated further.

Convenient.

"Will's been gone too long."

Lucas paused, setting the comic book he'd been flipping through aside. "Mike, it's been five minutes-"

"It's been *ten*," Mike shot back. Lucas rolled his eyes. Of course he'd been counting.

"Look. I'm sure he's okay. Maybe it's a religious group or something and Will's stuck talking to them."

"Yikes, sucks to be him," Dustin snorted, playing with a Rubik's Cube

that he had found on a shelf nearby.

Mike's leg bounced at high speeds as he waited for Will's return.

He gave in after another minute passed. "I'm going to go check on him-"

"*Mike* -" Lucas began in a warning tone, but was promptly ignored as their Paladin hurried out of the bedroom and towards the front door.

As Mike approached it, he noticed that the door had been closed, as if Will had stepped outside and shut it behind himself. He furrowed his eyebrows. Was someone here that Will didn't want anyone knowing about?

Mike then winced. There goes his brain again; jumping to impossible and irrational conclusions.

Trauma does that to you, kids.

"It's probably nothing," he reassured himself as he reached for the door handle. "It's probably *nothing* -"

Mike opened the door-

Just in time to see a boy- *his long lost twin* - wrap an arm around Will's middle and drag him closer.

The uncomfortable look on Will's face was all Mike needed to *act*.

"***You have three seconds to let go of him before I make you let go***."

Notes for the Chapter:

Okay, so, you know I had to do it to 'em :)

Poor Will. Can't catch a break.

Poor Richie. Doesn't know what's coming.

Poor everyone. Yikes.

Anyways, again, I hope you enjoyed this chapter!

Shit gets serious next time. :))))

6. Alike but Different

Notes for the Chapter:

> Coming to you live from my living room at 3:18am, here's the sixth chapter to this on-going crossover!
>
> Inhales ohhh my god this chapter took me years to write and, yet again, I'm still not super happy with it. What else is new? pfft-
>
> But!! It passed my test in the end, so I give it to you guys!!
>
> I hope you guys enjoy this next chapter <333
>
> And thank you so so so much for the overwhelming response on the last chapter. Your comments and kudos made me smile so big!!! It makes me so so happy to know people love this story.
>
> This story wouldn't be anything without you guys, so thank you very much!!
>
> Again, hope you enjoy it!

“WILLIAM. HEY!”

The wind blew viciously by as Richie let his bike fall to the side, pushing his glasses up his nose and hurrying up towards Will. The rest of the Losers quickly followed suit, eager to see their new friend.

Will's arm flew behind his back-

Richie narrowed his eyes slightly at that.

Did Will just hide something from them...?

“R-Richie?” the small boy stuttered, breaking Richie out of his thoughts. The younger was clearly stunned by their unexpected arrival. “Guys, w-what are you all doing here?”

“We came to rescue you, yes we did!” Richie sang in a posh British accent with a wide grin, masking his concern. At Will’s confused expression, he continued. “From your boring ol’ mother, that is!”

“Not that w-we think she’s b-buh-boring or anything,” Bill cleared his throat, nudging Richie with a ‘be nice’ warning look. “I-It’s just, u-uh…”

“We miss our eighth member,” Bev finished with a small grin and wink. “We wanted to see if we could get you out of family time to come hang with us. Granted, it was Richie’s idea to try, seeing as how the rest of us have respect and boundaries, but-”

“But that doesn’t matter,” Richie chimed, waving it off. “We’re here to break you the fuck out, Byers.”

Will’s heart thumped against his chest, his wide eyes looking out at the seven kids, all of whom were hopefully waiting for his answer. He was touched, really, that after only a week, his new friends cared about him enough to go up to his house and tell him that they missed him; that they would be more than happy to get him out of whatever *just* so they could spend more time with him.

Unfortunately, now really wasn’t the best time, and it hurt Will to have to disappoint them.

“U-uh...” Will licked his lips, stepping back down off of his porch to face them better. “I appreciate the thought, guys. Really. I-It means a lot that you guys would do that for me, especially since we haven’t known each other long. But tonight *really* isn’t a good night for me. I’m sorry...”

He trailed off, his heart clenching with slight guilt as a wave of obvious disappointment swept over the party.

Will hated letting people down, no matter how big or small the matter was.

‘Lucky’ for him, though, Trashmouth Tozier wasn’t going to let him slip away that easily.

“Does the reason you’re so hell-bent on staying here have anything to

do with what you're hiding behind your back?"

Richie had asked it as casually as one would comment on the weather.

Will's eyes widened at that and Richie knew he'd struck a nerve when he saw momentary panic flash through the younger's eyes.

"W-what? N-no, what're you talking about?!" Will asked a bit too quickly, taking a small step back.

The taller rolled his eyes, fixing his glasses once more. "I'm not fucking stupid, William. I saw you hide something when I yelled earlier. What is it?"

"Just something I got in the mail-"

"At 6 in the evening?"

"It's nothing. Really," Will stressed, his voice getting that 'you better not overstep boundaries' tone. He just hoped the boy would get the message and *leave it alone* .

"Prove it, then," Richie snorted.

Wishful thinking, I suppose, Will thought with a frown.

Mike stepped up from behind Richie, frowning as he rested a hand on his shoulder. "Rich. Come on. Let's just leave him alone."

The others murmured in tense, awkward agreement, worried that this would mess up their fragile new friendship with Will, but Richie continued anyways.

"No, I'm just curious," he said, stepping closer to Will. "If this thing he's hiding is more important than hanging with us, why can't we see it?"

"*Beep beep, Richie!* " Stan tried to stop him.

"Richie, it has nothing to do with you guys-!" Will started but was cut off by an arm sneaking around his waist. "*Richie!* "

The taller laughed, treating the situation like a big joke as he pulled Will to him, trying his best to get at the small object in Will's hand. "Come on, Bowlcut, just a peek!"

Will tried to ignore how hot his face got at their close proximity.

Bill and Eddie quickly stepped forward, fully prepared to yank Richie off of Will and apologize profusely for his obnoxious behavior, when suddenly-

"***You have three seconds to let go of him before I make you let go.***"

Everyone stopped, looking over to see a boy- *Richie's long lost twin*- standing on the Byers' porch, his gaze cold and *mad* .

Richie's breath hitched.

"Holy ***shit***."

Mike, admittedly, was taken aback the minute he really took in the appearance of the boy who had Will.

It was like staring into a mirror; a weird, sloppy, ocularly impaired one.

It freaked him out, really; the resemblance was uncanny and Mike almost began to question his parents' honesty when it came to how many kids they've always said they had. They'd say three, but now Mike wasn't so sure.

The crazy illusion, however, was shattered the moment the other boy spoke.

"Holy ***shit***."

Yeah, he'd worry about all of that later. There were more important things to deal with at the moment.

"Did I stutter?" Mike hissed once he'd snapped out of it, stepping

down off of the porch after seeing that no one had moved after his warning. “I said to *let go of him* -”

“You also said I had three seconds,” his ‘twin’ replied without hesitation, shrugging; *mocking*.

Mike bristled. “You’re *really* pushing it-”

“Mike, stop, it’s okay,” Will reassured, gently nudging the obnoxious boy off of him. Mike’s small outburst had been enough to distract him so that he could do so. “He was just messing around.”

The small boy walked over to Mike, who quickly wrapped a protective arm around his thin shoulders and eyed the others distrustfully.

Will took that time to quickly shove the box into his coat pocket.

Silence filled the air for a moment as everyone slowly took in everything that had happened over the past minute.

Then-

“*OH!* ”

The sudden exclamation belonged to the girl with the fiery red hair.

Mike looked at her questioningly, still a bit guarded. By now, he had used his common sense to figure out that the seven kids standing in front of him were the new friends Will had made during his time here.

Some friends, he thought bitterly, his gaze once more shifting over to the loudmouthed boy. *Letting him yank Will around like that.*

His gaze returned to the girl. “... What?”

She smiled, albeit a bit awkwardly. “You must be Will’s friend Mike; from Indiana, right?”

Mike blinked. “Uh… yeah. I am. How’d you…?”

“W-Will never sh-sh-shuts up about you s-sometimes,” the tall, lanky boy next to her explained with a small chuckle.

The boy’s smile dropped at the horrified look Will sent his way.

Mike tried to ignore the way his heart skipped a beat upon hearing that little tidbit of information.

“He told us you looked a lot like Richie here,” the short boy with the fannypack piped up, saving the tall boy from further humiliation. “But *shit*, we didn’t expect you guys to be twins.”

Richie.

So that’s what the asshole’s name was.

Mike eyed Richie, his grip subconsciously tightening around Will. “Yeah, well, *Richie* should learn what boundaries are.”

Richie snorted, unamused, and pushed his glasses back up his nose. “Jesus fuck, *come on*, you’re overreacting.”

“Overreacting?!” Mike scoffed. “You guys knocked on my best friend’s door, interrupted our visit, proceeded to harass him, invaded his personal space in the process, and I’m *overreacting?!* ”

The shorter, chubby boy, who had remained quiet the entire time, finally spoke up, finding Mike’s words a bit odd. “We didn’t knock on the door. Will was already outside when we got here.”

The Wheeler boy paused, glancing down at Will questioningly, who gave him a nervous smile. “Yeah, uh, no one was there when I answered the door. It was probably just some jerk teen.”

“Did the ‘jerk teen’ give you that box in your pocket?” Richie blurted.

Will glared at him. *He just couldn’t let it go, could he?*

“What’s in Will’s pocket is none of your damn business,” Mike snapped, fed up with Richie’s treatment towards his friend.

“Oh, so if there’s something bad or gross or *mean* in there, you

wouldn't want to fucking know, *Mr. Dick?!"* Richie shot back, fed up with Mike's constant accusations. "Since you're so fucking protective of him!?"

That made Mike stop and look down at Will, who suddenly wouldn't meet his gaze.

However, before he could continue, the sound of the front door opening from behind stopped him. A voice filled the air, indirectly announcing the arrival of its owner.

"Mike, I *swear* , you and Will better not be-"

Lucas stopped in the doorway of the Byers residence, blinking at the huge crowd of kids.

Behind him, Dustin gawked at the scene.

After yet another moment of awkward silence, Will spoke up, clearing his throat and interrupting the silent staring contest going on between the two parties.

He turned to his newer friends

"Uh, look, maybe we could all just go inside for a moment and talk about things in the living room. You know, since you guys made the trip out here. Dustin was asking about you guys earlier, anyways." Will shot the large group a reassuring smile, which was a sight for sore eyes after the mini-fight between the two look-alikes.

"Which one's that?" Fannypack boy piped questioningly, peering over at Dustin and Lucas.

"Yo," Dustin spoke up, grinning and waving at the group of friends from behind the other boy, who looked less than pleased at having his personal space invaded.

Mike rolled his eyes, annoyed. This was just like the Max situation back home, only seven times worse.

Well, there goes their weekend with Will…

Great.

“Ruh-Richie, wait.”

Bill reached out, gently grabbing Richie’s hand to hold him back as the others filed in after Will and them.

The trashmouth glanced back at the group’s leader with a small frown, pushing his glasses up his nose. “What? What is it?”

“You sh-should go easy on them.”

Richie gave him a look. “You’re shitting me, right? *That’s* what you’re stopping me for?!”

“Y-yes, it is.” The taller stood up straighter, confident in himself. “Will’s f-f-friends from Hah-Hawkins are visiting him a-and a-after the week he’s h-had, he d-deserves to have a nice time.”

“So, you’re saying I’m going to ruin the fun this weekend?” Richie scowled at him. “Real fucking subtle, Billiam.”

“R-Richie, I-I’m not trying to upset y-you,” Bill murmured, still holding onto his hand. “I just wuh-want us all to g-get along, is all, a-and we can’t d-do that if you’re m-making everyone mad.”

“Bill, *something* is going on with Will,” Richie stressed, suddenly serious. The quick change took Bill aback. “Ever since he had that fucking breakdown at your house, he hasn’t been acting right. I thought maybe if we came here and spent more time with him this weekend, I could ask him more about it and help him.” His frown deepened as he continued. “I *want to help him*, but lo and behold, Mikey boy and his buddies are suddenly here to fucking ruin everything."

“H-his friends could probably help h-him,” Bill murmured. “B-besides, y-you weren’t handling it exactly w-well, earlier.”

“Oh, for *fuck’s sake,* ” the shorter male scoffed. “It wasn’t that bad!

And did you forget that *we're his friends too?!* "

Bill stopped, feeling a bit guilty as Richie pulled his hand away and crossed his arms, scowling at the ground.

Richie had always been protective of his friends; ever since they were kids, he'd stand up to bullies and take black eyes with a grinning face, knowing that what he was doing was helping those he cared deeply for. So, it wasn't exactly a surprise that Richie was desperate to get to the bottom of what exactly it was that was bothering Will, who had so easily wormed his way into Richie's soft heart.

They had their fair share of ideas of what the problem was, of course.

"The clown. It almost got me."

But they were all impossible.

Absolutely *impossible*.

"... h-how about this," Bill began once more, taking Richie's hand back and squeezing it in a comforting way that just felt so natural to them both. "W-we give Will the weekend to enjoy w-with his old friends, and, th-then, if he's still acting weird, w-we talk to him at my house M-Monday night about what happened. D-deal?"

Richie hesitated before finally giving in. "...fine," he muttered, lightly swinging their hands back and forth. "But I'm not letting that Michael fuck walk all over me. Will's our friend, too. Mike and them are just going to have to deal with it."

Bill snorted. "Alright. F-fine." He (reluctantly) let go of Richie's hand. "Now l-let's go join th-the others before they w-wonder where we are."

Richie nodded, shooting Bill a small 'thank you' smile before finally walking inside Will's home.

Bill glanced behind them, just to make sure things were alright out there, before following suit.

IT was about ready to pounce, yes IT was.

IT had been waiting eagerly- desperately *- for the perfect opportunity to let itself be known once more to the children of Derry; to bite into the soft flesh of those plagued by 'innocence'.*

The arrival of one William Byers couldn't have had better timing.

IT licks IT's lips, IT's mouth watering at the mere thought of tearing into the ***brats*** *that had made a fool out of IT last summer. The brats had grown so fond of the new boy, yes they have, and IT couldn't have picked a better target for IT's first haunt- IT's first maim- IT's first comeback* ***kill.***

The boy was already scared of so much, thanks to his dark past. It wouldn't take much for IT to dig deeper into his mind for the juicier information IT looked for in each new game; not to mention the loss of the boy would devastate so many. It would throw the brats all off-guard and ***that's*** *when IT would truly strike.*

Starting with loudmouthed Richard and Stuttering Bill; the true roots of IT's demise.

IT shivered with anticipation as IT thought of what IT could do to further terrify small Will and get the ship sailing.

A Demogorgon and a silly old box were not nearly enough to 'fatten' IT's prey up, oh no. IT wanted the boy begging for Death's cold embrace by the time IT was done with him.

IT cackled from IT's dwelling, sending shivers down the spines of anyone near a storm drain.

Oh, IT couldn't wait to give the brats the shock they've had coming for months now; couldn't wait for revenge to be on IT's side for once.

IT grinned wickedly.

IT would stop at nothing until every single child of Derry thought of nothing but cold, delicious fear.

It only takes one to start a whole chain reaction!

Notes for the Chapter:

IT's getting impatient, isn't IT...? Ohhhhhh-

So, again, I really hope you guys enjoyed this chapter. I'm sorry if it wasn't as climatic as you hoped it would be but I was trying so so hard to keep everyone in character, so I couldn't do anything too outrageous.

I'm happy to say I can finally start to really build the relationships between Byeler and Bichie!! <3 Hope you guys caught that, lmao

In the next chapter, we delve more into Will's mind and the group discovers something... not quite right with Derry.

Until then~! <3

7. We Can't Keep Pretending

Notes for the Chapter:

> So... guess who's still alive :)))
>
> I am so so so sorry for such a late update. My new job has been insane lately and I haven't really had any time at all to work on this story. But after a few days of writing and rewriting, I finally came up with a chapter I deemed worthy for the comeback post aye~
>
> I hope it's not too rushed or all over the place!
>
> Thank you so much for your continued support and I love you all so so so so much!!
>
> I hope you enjoy! <3

Will buried his face in his hands as water ran from the sink's faucet and straight down into the drain, the sound putting his mind at ease, if only slightly.

He could still hear the others talking from the living room; his friends, old and new, weren't exactly the quietest.

The box remained heavy in his pocket.

"Wow, I still can't believe Micycle Wheels scared Wills Bills off."

*"**Shut it** , Richard."*

Will snorted under his breath, giving himself a moment to breathe. Needless to say, bringing everyone into his home had been… a lot, and within five minutes of sitting down and getting settled with all 11 teens in the Byers' already-cramped living room, all of the following occurred, leaving Will dumbfounded and his mother, who had been on her way out to grab more groceries for dinner with Jonathan, nervous about leaving them all to their devices:

Richie and Mike went at each other's throats after a particularly personal (joking) comment about Will from the former.

Bill and Lucas ended up having to hold their respective friends back.

Dustin questioned the legitimacy of Mike's 'not-relation' to Richie thanks to their similar appearance, causing his long-time best friend offense and earning a two-minute shun session.

And Mike and Mike both grew very tired, very fast of the confusion brought on by their names (which was never truly solved).

Will had drawn the line and excused himself to the bathroom when Mike nearly crushed his hand after (posessively) holding it as Richie introduced himself formally to the group as 'the best thing to have happened to Will Byers since bowlcuts'.

The small boy sighed, feeling a slight headache come on as the voices from outside the bathroom continue to carry over.

"*You like birds?"* Dustin.

"Yeah. I birdwatch sometimes." Stan.

"... so, like… you do that on your own time?" A more confused Dustin.

"Is that a problem, Perm Boy?" A defensive Richie.

"Richie." A defensive Mike.

Yeah.

Will decided a few more minutes alone would be best before walking back out there and playing the mediator between the two groups once more.

He lightly frowned to himself, letting the water continue to run. If he was going to be honest with himself, Will was a bit frustrated. He had invited everyone into his house in hopes of merging the two friend groups and perhaps leaving behind all of his stress and worry for a moment; to have *fun* and forget the dangers that lurked in the world.

But the ‘twins’ couldn’t get along, and, based on his experiences in both parties, if *those two* weren’t happy, than nobody was, really.

Will stood back up straighter, taking another deep breath. No. He could do this. His best friends from Indiana came all the way to see him and he wasn’t going to just sit back and let this weekend fall apart.

With that, Will reached forward to turn off the faucet-

And then yanked his hand back, startled at how *cold* the water was that had splashed him.

He frowned. The temperature had been set to *warm*, not cold.

Shaking it off, Will went to shut the water off once more when a voice, *cackling*, echoed inside of his mind-

Cold.

*Just like **that place**.*

Right, Willy?

“I have a question,” Bev piped up suddenly once she was sure that Will was still in the bathroom. She looked straight at the boys from Indiana. “A-and I understand it’s personal. But…”

Lucas and Dustin exchanged apprehensive glances while their Mike narrowed his eyes in suspicion.

“What exactly happened to Will?”

Silence was the first to answer her.

Then, after a moment, Mike shook his head, angry. “No. We’re not telling you. Nice try.”

Bev made a face at that.

Richie scoffed, pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose. “No need to be a jackass about it, Wheeler. She was just asking, and frankly? I get it’s Will’s story to tell but in this case, we kinda need to know.”

Mike bristled, his protective side rearing its ugly head. “No, you don’t! It’s none of your business.”

“I-it is w-when Will’s been acting weird and p-paranoid all w-w-week and we can’t h-help him,” Bill murmured softly, understanding where Richie had been going with things. *They worked well together, the two of them.*

Mike stopped, as did the rest of the group.

“Look, I get we haven’t made the best impression on you, Wheeler,” Richie continued, knowing full well he was pulling a deep conversation out of thin air and taking everyone aback; but Will was out of the room and Beverly’s question had been the perfect segue into getting information he desperately wanted. So, fuck it. He was going to pry.

Plus, he wasn’t technically breaking the deal he and Bill had made earlier, seeing as how they were talking to Will’s friends and not Will himself.

“But if there’s one thing we have in common, it’s that we both care about Will a fucking *lot*. Now, I’m not going to drag this shit out all weekend. I’m not a dick. But since you three don’t live here, *someone’s* going to have to look out for Will and none of us can fucking do that unless we have some idea as to what’s going on with him!”

They did have an idea as to what was going on.

They just didn’t want to believe it.

Not when there could be something else to put their minds at ease.

Mike swallowed thickly, crossing his arms and looking at Richie with a careful yet dangerous gaze. “Good thing we’re not leaving witho-”

Lucas elbowed Mike's side **hard**, cutting him off.

Dustin coughed to ease the tension.

Richie raised an eyebrow at that, sitting up more. "I'm sorry, Micycle, your friend had a muscle spasm. What were you saying?"

"Nothing," Mike muttered, nursing his side and side-eyeing Lucas.

"I call bullshit, sir!"

"I said it was *nothing,*" Wheeler bit, glaring. "Now we're going to drop the subject before Will gets back, okay?! *We're not telling you!* "

Richie sunk back in his seat, leaning into Bill beside him and grumbling profanities under his breath.

Awkward silence settled around them once more, heavy and uncomfortable, until one person broke it.

"Can you at least tell us if Will's had any nightmares before? Or hallucinations?" Mike Hanlon asked, surprising everyone in the room.

Mike blinked, taken aback. "Hallucinations?"

"Yeah. Like… did he see things? Things that weren't there?"

Richie felt his pulse quicken.

Mike bit his lip. "He'd have… episodes," he murmured, much to Richie's relief. *Finally,* he thought. *Information. Thank you, sheep boy*. "They weren't often. Once or twice a month. But they were almost like visions."

"Visions of what?" Ben asked from where he sat beside a silent Eddie.

"Not telling."

Richie couldn't help himself. "It wasn't of clowns, was it?"

Eddie suddenly dove for his inhaler, something he found he still needed even after putting a stop to his mother's brainwashing.

The mood in the room shifted completely after Richie spoke, causing everyone extreme discomfort.

“Clowns?” Mike frowned, confused. “No…?”

Richie ran a trembling hand through his hair. “Fucking great,” he muttered.

Wheeler decided it was *his* turn to ask questions. “Did something happen recently?” he asked. “With Will, I mean. Did he see something?”

Richie almost didn’t answer him out of pure spite, seeing as how they’d barely gotten any information for *their* questions, but after reminding himself that *they were doing this for Will*, he gave in and went to respond-

But Eddie beat him to it.

“Monday night,” the small hypochondriac muttered after taking a hit from his inhaler. “We were at Bill’s house. Will had gone to call his mom. Ten minutes later, we heard him screaming bloody murder from the basement. We went to help him, and all that he told us after he’d calmed down was… that ‘the clown almost got him’.”

Bill felt like he’d been punched in the stomach. It was just impossible. *No way.* Will *had* to have meant something else.

Mike thought for a moment, processing the information, and then buried his face in his hands as realization settled in. “... demons,” he mumbled aloud.

“What the fuck?” Richie blurted in response, confused.

Mike looked up at him, suddenly dead serious. “I talked to Will on the phone Monday night. He asked me if I believed in demons.” He bit his lip, lightly toying with it. “I-I didn’t know what he’d been referring to, but if he saw something in that basement, then…”

“*Dude!* ” Lucas suddenly snapped, annoyed. “You never told us about that!”

“Yeah, what the hell, Mike?!” Dustin huffed, backing the other up.

Mike glared, not in the mood. “I didn’t think much of it, okay?! Back off-”

He suddenly paused upon noticing the nervous looks the Losers were all giving each other; the silent conversations between gazes and the secretive vibes they were giving off.

His eyes narrowed dangerously at the group of teens he barely knew. “You guys know something.”

No one made eye contact with him, which only confirmed his suspicions.

Mike bristled, anger slowly building up inside of him. “You damn *liars*,” he snapped. “You *know* something! Something that could help deal with whatever’s going on with Will! And you won’t say *shit!* ”

“I-It’s complicated,” Bill tried, lamely. “I-It’s a horrible, complicated, long s-story, a-and it m-might not be what’s g-going on here-”

“But what if it is?! *Whatever* it is??” Mike scoffed, trying his best not to lash out too bad. “Will said this town was dangerous earlier; that this place isn’t right. I thought he was just homesick, but you guys clearly know something we don’t. Now *spill it.*”

“It’s not exactly an easy thing to fucking deal and come to terms with, asshole,” Richie snapped, his patience running thin. “Bill wasn’t lying when he said it’s fucking complicated. You want us to respect your guys’ privacy?!”

Mike swallowed as Richie continued, never once breaking eye contact with him.

“Then respect *ours*.”

Will shot back from the sink, hitting the wall behind him.

He couldn't breathe and his chest suddenly felt tight-

Way too tight.

"*What's wrong, Willy?"* **IT's** voice asked with feigned concern. "*Do you not like the cold?"*

Will clamped his hands over his ears, shutting his eyes tightly in an effort to block out the voice that had been haunting him all week. "Stop," he mumbled. "Stop, stop, *stop*."

Evil, chilling laughter echoed around him, causing him to shrink back further. He wanted nothing more than to sink back into the wall behind him.

"Leave me *alone*," Will snapped, a bit louder this time, the water running from the faucet sounding like thunder at this point; taunting and distracting. "*Stop!"*

"*Come float with me, Will,"* IT taunted. "*Down the drain, down the sewers, down down down!"*

" No-*"*

"I'll take good care of you~"

"I said to *STOP!!!* "

"*William-"*

"NO!"

"***FLOAT WITH ME!*** "

And that's when Will felt it-

The vine gripping his leg.

It gave a sharp tug without warning, yanking Will down onto the floor. He hit the ground with a hard *thud*, his head smacking against the tiled floor.

He groaned at the impact, moving to nurse his head in hopes of

easing some of the pain-

But was quickly brought back to reality as vines started to crawl all over him, pinning him to the ground, trapping him, *suffocating* him-

Will let out a terrified cry, kicking and pushing at the vines that threatened to swallow him whole; the *exact same* vines that had consumed everything in the Upside Down.

Where were they coming from?!

He was far away from Hawkins-

*How were they **here?!***

Exhaustion quickly caught up to Will as the vines wrapped tighter and tighter around his small frame. He could hardly intake any air by that point and he felt a sob well up in his throat as IT continued to howl with demented laughter all around him, firmly believing IT had won this round.

But right before the last vine covered his mouth, Will cried out in a last, desperate attempt to save himself, his world going dark right after.

"***MIKE!!!*** "

Time seemed to stand still for everyone sitting in the Byers' living room upon hearing Will's cry.

"...Will," Mike choked out, frightened, before scrambling to his feet. "WILL!"

The others were right on his heels as Mike made a beeline for the bathroom around the corner.

No one dared to waste any time.

Upon reaching the bathroom, Wheeler lunged for the door,

immediately trying the handle-

"***SHIT!*** "

-and finding it locked.

"Will?!" Mike pounded his fists against the door, desperate to hear Will's voice, *scared out of his mind*. "Will, answer me! Are you okay?! Will!!"

"Jesus fuck, we *don't have time for this!* " Richie snapped, yanking Mike back roughly. "Better Mike! Front and center! We're breaking in!"

Hanlon nodded, hurrying up beside Richie without hesitation.

Wheeler didn't even bother being offended.

"One! Two! THREE!" Richie and Mike both jumped forward and slammed their shoulders into the bathroom door. To their dismay, it didn't give in-

But they *did* feel it give away a little.

"Shit, *fuck*, my shoulder-" Richie whined, gripping said shoulder in a nursing manner. "Bill, your turn."

Bill jumped at the chance to help, moving past Richie and standing beside Mike.

Another countdown-

Then they lunged forward.

CRASH!

The door gave way suddenly and before they could catch themselves, the two boys fell forward into the bathroom, landing on something hard-

Something- or some*one*- with pale skin and a mole on the left side of his face.

Bill and Mike both shot off of the body, horrified at their discovery.

"Shit," Bill breathed.

Lying unconscious in front of them, skin as pale and cold as snow, was none other than young Will Byers.

Mike Wheeler let out a strangled cry once he saw the scene, shoving through the teens crowded around the door and straight into the bathroom. Richie, Dustin, and Lucas were all right behind him.

"*Fuck,* " Mike choked, shoving past Bill and Hanlon and falling to his knees beside the small boy his world revolved around. He cupped Will's face, trembling. "No. *Nononononono*- Will, come on. Wake up. Wake *up* -!"

"What the hell happened to him?!" Richie blurted, horrified as he took in how sickly Will looked. "He was fine ***thirty fucking minutes ago!*** "

Bill shook his head, feeling a bit numb. He had no idea.

None of them did.

Mike couldn't stop shaking. He pulled Will closer, wanting nothing more than to wrap him up in warm blanket and hide him from *anything* and *everything* that could potentially do his best friend harm.

Ben then spoke up from the doorway, his tone a bit odd. "Bill…"

Bill closed his eyes, already knowing what he was about to say.

"I-It's possible it could be..."

"But how?!" Bill exploded, standing and whirling to face the chubby boy. "We killed IT! IT's *gone* ! IT can't hurt us anymore!"

"*Look at Will!"* Ben snapped, pointing to their fallen friend. "You think it's a coincidence that this happened the same week as what

happened Monday night?! The same week Will spent acting funny and mumbling stuff about *clowns?!* ”

Richie looked back at Mike, Dustin, and Lucas, all of whom were sitting around their best friend with equally confused and terrified expressions on their faces.

Bill felt his eyes water. “W-we killed IT,” he mumbled. “IT’s gone. G-Georgie was avenged. T-there’s no way...”

He trailed off, unable to keep himself from looking back down at the three boys holding Will.

His empathy and need to protect ended up making the crucial decision for him the moment his conflicted gaze met Michael Wheeler’s desperate one.

It was time to stop pretending.

“...okay,” he murmured suddenly yet with finality.

“We’ll tell you g-guys everything.”

Bill looked down further at the small boy in Mike’s arms, his heart twisting at Will’s sad state of being.

Friends don’t leave each other behind.

“For Will.”

Notes for the Chapter:

> Alright, well. RIP Will. :))
>
> Again, thank you so much for reading and I hope you enjoyed this late update lmao
>
> Next chapter, we finally see what's inside the box and everyone learns of the past to help deal with the future.
>
> until next time～ ＜3

ps: i have thought about richie x will lol but i wasnt sure if you guys would like it. feel free to let me know about it, but i might just stick with byeler and bichie <3